(a) whether extra departmental staff are allowed ten days leave in a year provided they arrange for substitute;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are aware that leave facilities to the extra departmental staff under Bihar Sheriff Circle have been stopped through a verbal order;

(d) if so, the details in this regard and the reasons therefore; and

(e) what steps Government propose to take to restore the leave facilities in order to bring uniformity throughout the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR): (a) and (b) Consequent upon implementation of recommendations of Justice Talwar Committee constituted to examine system of Extra Departmental Agents, now called Gramin Dak Sevaks, their conditions of employment, wage structure etc., ten days' paid leave for every half year without facility of carry forward or encashment was introduced, *vide* Government orders dated 17.12.98. In addition to paid leave, Gramin Dak Sevaks can also avail leave without allowances upto a maximum of 180 days in a year which can further be relaxed in exceptional cases like genuine illness. The Gramin Dak Sevak is required to provide substitute to man the post if this arrangement is felt necessary by the leave sanctioning authority. In such cases, substitute is paid minimum of the Time Related Continuity Allowance (TRCA) whereas the regular Gramin Dak Sevak gets his allowance as usual for the period of paid leave.

(c) to (e) The leave facility to the Gramin Dak Sevaks in Nalanda Division, Bihar Sheriff or in any Division in Bihar Circle has not been stopped by any verbal orders. The provision of paid leave and leave without allowances is uniformly applicable to all Gramin Dak Sevaks throughout the country.

Quality of Cellular and Basic Phone Services

† 2964. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that no operator is able to satisfy the consumers in the matter of quality of service whether it is basic phone service or cellular phone service;

(b) whether Government propose to put any compulsion on these operators for the compliance of service standards;

(c) if so, whether Government propose to take any action against the operators not complying with the said standards; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) and (b) Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) issues Quality of Service (QoS) regulation for various services. There are several parameters in defining QoS for each service. It has been reported by TRAI that no operator is able to meet all parameters. TRAI verifies the reports regarding value of the quality of service and puts on its website to make consumers aware about the quality of service providers. TRAI through process of interaction with service providers attempts to ensure compliance of the regulations.

(e) TRAI has not recommended against the operators not complying with the said standards.

(a) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

Setting up of New Post Offices

†2965. PROF. R.B.S. VARMA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of post offices proposed to be opened in the country during the Tenth Five Year Plan period, State-wise;

(b) the number of post offices proposed to be opened during 2003-04, State-wise; and

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.